

5 FAM 200 CORRESPONDENCE

5 FAM 210 PREPARING OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENCE

(TL:IM-25; 2-20-1998)

5 FAM 211 SCOPE AND AUTHORITY

(TL:IM-25; 2-20-1998)

a. This chapter presents the policy governing official correspondence prepared in Department of State domestic and overseas offices. It identifies the types of official correspondence; outlines the Department's policy for signing Congressional correspondence and corresponding with a foreign government; provides information security guidance; authorizes the use of official letterhead stationery, Official Informal letters, and captions; and, explains clearances and overall signing authority.

b. The Regulations Division (A/IM/IAP/RG) coordinates 5 FAM (Information Management) policies and procedures and ensures the accuracy and completion of 5 FAM chapters and handbooks. The Directives Management Branch (A/IM/CST/MMS/DIR) manages the Department's directives program that governs the operations of the Department (see 1 FAM).

5 FAM 212 GENERAL POLICY

(TL:IM-25; 2-20-1998)

a. Prepare all correspondence in accordance with the guidelines in the Correspondence Handbook (5 FAH-1). The various types of correspondence i.e., telegrams, memorandums, letters, diplomatic notes, Department notices, and invitations are authorized for use by members of the Department of State to conduct official business.

b. The Secretariat Handbook contains guidelines for preparing correspondence for the Secretary and other seventh-floor principals. The Graphics Standards Handbook (5 FAH-7) contains guidelines for the design and appearance of Department of State communications.

c. Refer to 5 FAM 1200 for the policy regarding communications with the United Nations and International Organizations. See 7 FAM for the policy for corresponding with consular offices or missions, other Federal agencies, Federal benefits, Treasury checks, selective service, and miscellaneous services to U.S. citizens residing abroad.

d. See 5 FAM 500 for E-mail transmission policies; See 5 FAM 400 (Records Management Policy) for the policy governing records.

e. Congressional correspondence must be answered promptly. Unless the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs (H) delegates the authority to other Departmental principals on a case by case basis, H signs:

(1) all correspondence to Congress and to the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) concerning the Department's legislative program or other legislative matters;

(2) all correspondence to Congress concerning the Department's appropriations or authorization legislation; and

(3) all correspondence to Congress concerning all matters relating to management of the Department or Foreign Service.

f. Congressional inquiries concerning matters under the jurisdiction of the Inspector General are handled directly by the Office of the Inspector General (see the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended).

g. Personnel at post may respond directly to Congressional correspondence under the signature of the chief or deputy chief of mission or a principal officer. See 9 FAM for instructions on replying to Congressional inquiries on visa and immigration matters.

h. Use diplomatic notes for correspondence between the U.S. Government and a foreign government. Letters may be used at the discretion of the Secretary. Personnel at diplomatic missions may correspond directly with the central government of the country in which they are located.

5 FAM 213 DEFINITION

(TL:IM-25; 2-20-1998)

“Official Correspondence” is a variety of written and/or recorded forms of formal or informal communication generated by members of the Department and posts to conduct official business on behalf of the Department of State.

5 FAM 214 OFFICIAL STATIONERY

(TL:IM-25; 2-20-1998)

a. Prepare all correspondence on official Department of State letterhead. Official correspondence may be generated on forms or form letters affixed with the official Department of State name or seal.

b. Official stationery is only authorized for conducting official Department of State business and must not be used by personnel in any capacity to conduct personal business.

5 FAM 215 INFORMATION SECURITY

(TL:IM-25; 2-20-1998)

a. Documents classified for national security reasons must be marked by the original classification authority according to the requirements of Executive Order 12958.

b. Drafting officers must ensure that classified documents bear the appropriate declassification or downgrading instructions in accordance with 12 FAM 500 .

c. Unclassified documents that require some degree of protection must be marked with the Administrative Control Designation, Sensitive But Unclassified (SBU). See 12 FAM 500 for complete guidelines.

d. The approving official bears final responsibility for the security of classified documents.

5 FAM 216 OFFICIAL INFORMAL LETTERS

(TL:IM-25; 2-20-1998)

a. Official Informal letters are authorized for correspondence between officials of the Department and officers at posts; officials of other Federal agencies and officers of the Foreign Service performing work on a continuous basis; and officers at posts for corresponding between posts.

b. The content of these letters may convey or ask for opinions or interpretation of future or established policy, exchange views, report progress, and obtain or provide background information on formal communication.

5 FAM 217 CLEARANCES

(TL:IM-25; 2-20-1998)

a. Clearances in the Department must adhere to 2 FAM 1200 and 5 FAH-1 (Correspondence Handbook).

b. Officers at posts must obtain local clearances appropriate to the subject matter. If policy matters are involved, the original and one copy must be sent to the appropriate Department office under cover of an explanatory memorandum. After clearance, the clearing office transmits the original to the addressee and sends one copy to A/IM/IPS/AAS.

5 FAM 218 CAPTIONS

(TL:IM-25; 2-20-1998)

a. Use captions to control distribution and handling. Officers must ensure that correspondence requiring captions contain only those captions listed in 5 FAH-1 H-700 to determine distribution and handling requirements.

b. The Executive Secretariat (S/S-O) must approve all newly formulated captions before authorization is granted.

c. Captions will be decategorized five years from the date of the document on which the caption appears.

5 FAM 219 SIGNING AUTHORITY

(TL:IM-25; 2-20-1998)

a. Officers sign correspondence that fall within the scope of their functions and responsibilities as defined in 1 FAM . This includes correspondence addressed to the President or the Secretary and assigned to an office for a direct reply.

b. Domestic telegrams originating within the Washington metropolitan area and transmitted by A/IM/MSO/MPD will bear the name of the Secretary or Acting Secretary at the end of the telegram.

c. Domestic telegrams originating within the Washington metropolitan area away from the main State building (by any entity, annex, or office) with its own authorized communications center will not bear the name of the Secretary or designated official at the end of the telegram (e.g., NFATC).

d. Domestic telegrams originating from facilities outside of the Washington metropolitan area (e.g., USUN) may bear the name of the Director of the facility at the end of the telegram.